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ABSTRACT

Through a number of measures, both quantitative and qualitative, this progress report explores the achievements of Southeastern public schools in meeting the continually expanding goal of quality education for all citizens. Quantitative figures are shown, regionally and state by state, for ages of compulsory attendance, public and private school enrollments (1980), public school enrollment per population, and literacy of population (1900 and 1980). Qualitative measures of educational progress are provided by graphs and charts illustrating percent of high school graduates in the United States population (1870-1970), high school graduates 25 and older (1970 and 1980), median school years completed (1950 and 1980), public kindergarten enrollment (1970 and 1980), black adults completing four or more years of high school (1970 and 1980), percentages of nonwhite populations, numbers of exceptional children served in public school programs, percent of children served in different educational environments, pupil/teacher ratios, minimum competency testing, and per capita personal income levels (relative to the nation as a whole). Conclusions derived from these statistics suggest three major challenges confronting education in the Southeast: (1) overcoming the legacy of poverty, (2) helping the nation compete in a highly technological world society, and (3) providing quality education with decreasing public resources. (TE)

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ED240691

Southeastern Educational Information System Analyses

Public Education In The Southeast: A Progress Report

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The Southeastern Regional Council for Educational Improvement is a nonprofit, interstate organization created and governed by the Chief State School Officers of twelve Southeastern states. A major function of the Southeastern Regional Council is to assist member State Departments of Education to study educational policy issues within the social, political, and economic context of the region, and to design alternatives for policy action.

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SEIS ANALYSES

VOLUME II

PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE SOUTHEAST: A PROGRESS REPORT

SOUTHEASTERN EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION SYSTEM

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FOREWORD

In any enterprise, the periodic review of accomplishments and progress is invaluable. It offers the opportunity to reassess goals and to identify effective strategies. In a democratic society, such reviews are essential if public institutions are to respond fully to the needs and wishes of the population. In "A Progress Report," The Southeastern Regional Council for Educational Improvement provides such an assessment of the efforts of the southeastern public schools to meet the goal of free, quality education for all its citizens.

On the whole, the data tell a story of growth: growing expectations of the schools and growing success in meeting them, increased services, and expanded opportunities.

Unquestionably, problems remain. Although many gaps have been closed or narrowed, the region still remains below national averages in many areas of educational opportunity and attainment. While we do not ignore these problems, our purpose is to assess the progress that has been made. From this assessment, southeastern education leaders may gain insight and understanding that will serve them to meet the remaining challenges.

"A Progress Report" draws a general picture of public education in the Southeast, touching on a number of aspects of schooling only briefly. These include minimum competency testing, education finance issues, accountability, and technology – topics that are more thoroughly discussed in technical reports which have been or will be issued by the Southeastern Regional Council for Educational Improvement.

Throughout this report, the terms "Southeast" and "southeastern states" refer to the 12 states comprising the Southeastern Regional Council for Educational Improvement: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. Much of the information in this report is based on educational and socioeconomic data in the Southeastern Educational Information System (SEIS), which is maintained by the Southeastern Regional Council. Additional data for historical comparisons have been drawn from available federal and state sources.

PREFACE

"Universal education" – a term which most aptly describes the mission of the public schools – is the historical commitment of the United States to extend the benefits of a basic education to every citizen. Underlying the fundamental belief in the value of education are three distinct and sometimes conflicting concerns: political, social, and economic. Each has shaped the educational process and the choice of public policies for accomplishing the goal of education for all.

This goal is historically original to the United States, linked to the democratic ideal of an informed citizenry actively participating in the governing process. It is also derived from the practical need to forge a unified society from a population of diverse cultural origins and from the need for a skilled and innovative work force to develop the resources of a sparsely populated continent.

Those political, social, and economic objectives remain relevant today. In recent years, as public issues have become increasingly complex, the need for an informed citizenry is greater than ever. The practical need for a growing, skilled labor force has likewise survived the end of the frontier era. The development and maintenance of a productive, creative population remains an essential role of the public schools if Americans are to participate fully in the rapidly evolving and highly technological world economy.

Socialization of individuals and the broadening of their cultural understanding continue to be important responsibilities of the public schools. A rich diversity of cultures characterizes American society and immigration from throughout the world remains a factor in U.S. population growth. In 1980, for example, 6.2 percent of the American population was born abroad. Thus, the public schools must continue to provide newcomers, as well as youth, the opportunity to become fully participating members of our society.

As the definition of "universal education" has evolved, the social responsibilities of the public schools have grown. Most striking is the example of the role the schools have played in fulfilling the nation's commitment to equal opportunity. Historically, "universal education" has been limited. Persons of racial minorities, women, and handicapped individuals have been excluded in part or in whole from educational opportunities. But that has changed. Perhaps more than any other public institution, the public schools have helped to change society's beliefs and the expectations of today's schools are clear: educational opportunities must be accessible to all persons in society and it is the responsibility of the public schools' leadership to ensure that accessibility.

Thus, the mission of the public schools – education for all citizens – is many-layered and complex, changing in time as social values and needs change, and encompassing many specific social, political, and economic goals. In measuring the progress of the public schools toward the fulfillment of that mission, a number of indicators must be evaluated. The data on the following pages trace a path of steady progress toward that multi-faceted goal.

PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE SOUTHEAST: A PROGRESS REPORT

If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be.

Thomas Jefferson

At the turn of the century, the average literacy rate in the Southeast region was 73.6 percent. In 1980, the literacy rate in every southeastern state exceeded 97 percent. In those two numbers is a story of accomplishment and progress – a story that goes well beyond the achievement of nearly universal literacy. The result of public schooling across several generations has been a society in which the total population is more literate, more culturally and politically aware, and more economically productive than would have been possible without the public school system. Furthermore, these gains have been accomplished without violating the high level of public participation deemed appropriate in our democratic society.

Since 1900, and particularly over the past three decades, the public schools have enrolled and graduated more students than ever before, expanded curricula and services, and played a pivotal role in the nation's efforts to provide equal opportunity to its citizens.

Perhaps more significant is that the accomplishments occurred in a context of continually growing expectations. The goal of simple literacy of 1900 is but a lower rung on today's educational ladder. Schools are expected not only to provide instruction to all in the "Three Rs," but to serve a multiplicity of public needs – from programs for the handicapped to life-long vocational and basic educational opportunities. Schools' responsibilities include not only the mental development, but the physical well-being, socialization, and vocational training of their students.

Through a number of measures, both quantitative and qualitative, "A Progress Report" explores the achievements of the public schools in meeting the continually expanding American goal of education for all citizens.

ASSESSING PROGRESS: QUANTITATIVE MEASURES

Intelligence and virtue being the safeguard of liberty and bulwark of a free and good government, the state shall ever maintain a general, suitable,and efficient system of free schools, whereby all persons in the state between the ages of 6 and 21 years receive gratuitous instruction.

Article XIV. Section 1. Constitution of the State of Arkansas

In the first analysis, "universal education" means that all citizens have access to and are served by the schools. Thus, the most obvious indicators of success in meeting that goal are quantitative measures: numbers of enrollees, graduates, and persons served in various school programs.

Commitment to the public policy goal of education for all citizens has deep historical roots in the Southeast. Every state has expressed that commitment in a basic constitutional provision, like the one cited above of the State of Arkansas. Further, each of the region's states has enacted and enforces a compulsory school attendance law that, in most cases, applies to children aged 7 to 16. (Figure 1 shows the specific age ranges of compulsory attendance laws in each of the region's states.) An important aspect of recent progress in education is the renewed effort by every state in the region to improve application and enforcement of the compulsory attendance laws.

In 1980, the public schools of the 12 southeastern states enrolled 9.7 million students in programs from kindergarten through the 12th grade – primarily from the 5 to 17 year-old age group. Of the 11 million 5-17 year-olds in the Southeast in 1980, 88.2 percent attended public schools. (See Figure 2.)

In every southeastern state, more than 80 percent of the youngsters aged 5 to 17 were being served by the public school programs in 1980, with enrollments ranging

FIGURE 1
AGES OF COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

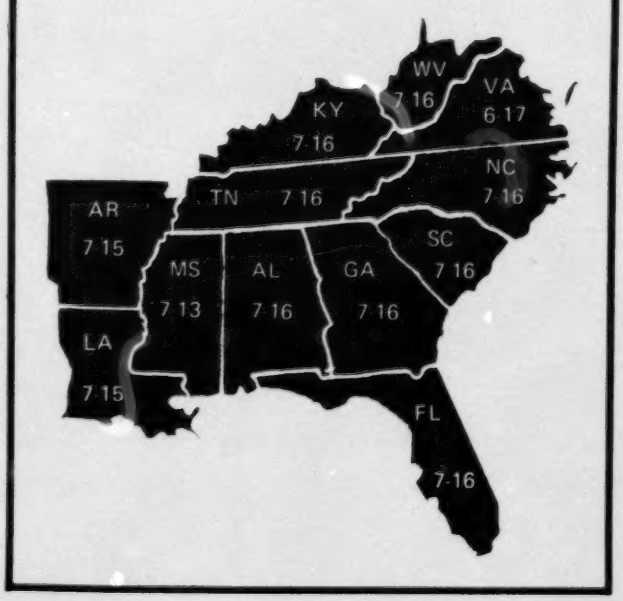
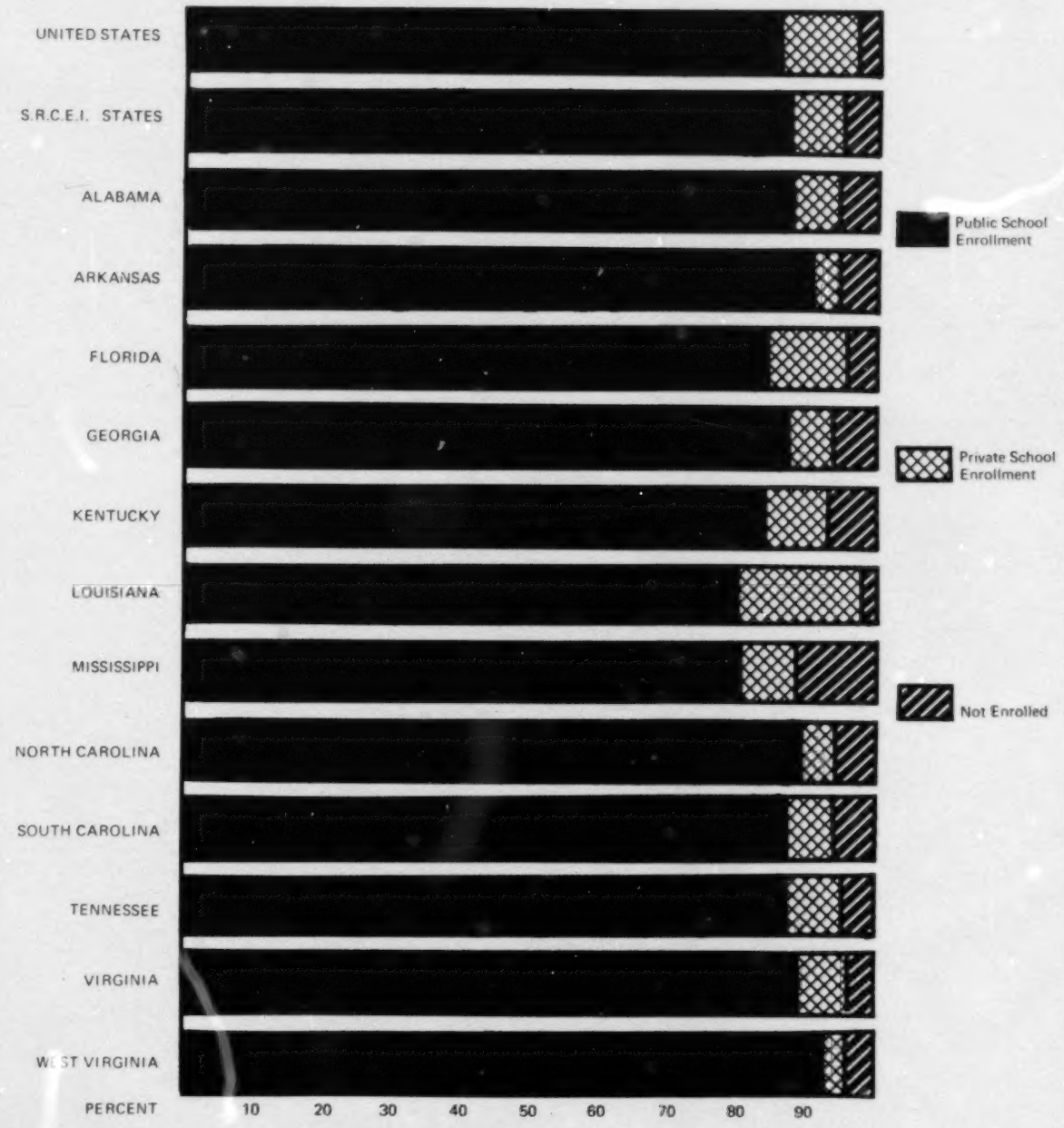


FIGURE 2 — PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOL ENROLLMENTS, 1980



PERCENT	Public Enrollment	Private Enrollment	Not Enrolled	PERCENT	Public Enrollment	Private Enrollment	Not Enrolled
UNITED STATES	86.2	10.6	3.2	LOUISIANA	80.5	17.2	2.3
SRCEI	86.4	8.3	5.3	MISSISSIPPI	80.2	8.4	11.4
ALABAMA	87.2	7.1	5.7	NORTH CAROLINA	89.7	4.7	5.6
ARKANSAS	90.5	3.8	5.7	SOUTH CAROLINA	87.4	7.1	5.5
FLORIDA	84.3	11.4	4.3	TENNESSEE	87.6	7.5	4.9
GEORGIA	87.0	6.8	6.2	VIRGINIA	89.1	6.7	4.2
KENTUCKY	84.2	8.9	6.9	WEST VIRGINIA	92.8	3.1	4.1

SOURCES: U.S. Census Bureau, "Provisional Estimates of Social, Economic and Housing Characteristics, 1980," pp. 14-19, "Condition of Education 1982," p. 48, "NCES Bulletin," June 1982, p. 7.

from 80.2 percent in Mississippi to 92.8 percent in West Virginia. The United States average for 5-17 year-old participation in public schooling was 86.2 percent. Thus, eight of the twelve southeastern states have public school enrollment rates greater than the national average.

That picture is not new. More than any other region of the country, the Southeast has relied historically on public school systems to meet the goal of education for all citizens. (A fact relevant to the debate concerning federal tuition tax credits.)

Table 1 provides a more detailed picture of enrollments, showing not only the population aged 5-17, but both public and private school enrollments in the region. In 1980, 9,702,000 youngsters were enrolled in southeastern public schools. Of those not in the public schools, the largest proportion were five- and six-year-olds who had not yet entered school. Of those remaining, some were enrolled in private schools; some had left school prior to graduation or had graduated early through accelerated study; some were too physically or mentally incapacitated to participate in either regular or special school programs and others were confined to correctional institutions.

The relatively high regional reliance on public education may be seen by comparing the average private school enrollments in the Southeast (8.3 percent) to those of the nation (10.6 percent). (See Figure 2.) Every state in the region except Louisiana (17.2 percent) and Florida (11.4 percent) had private school enrollments below the national average. In those two states, Catholic Church operated schools accounted for 72 and 36 percent of private school enrollments, respectively.

Public school enrollments in the southeastern states share a further distinction: they are more fully integrated than school systems in most other states. Recent surveys have shown that the desegregation efforts of the last 25 years have been highly successful in the Southeast, where White and Black students alike are more likely to attend school with members of other races than are students in other parts of the country.*

Literacy Rate Nears 100 Percent

Enrollment levels are obvious indicators for evaluating progress in public education. Equally revealing are measures of the results of schooling. Since literacy is the most basic of the goals of our educational system, the percentage of the adult population defined as literate provides a rough indicator of progress toward the goal of education for all. Figure 3 compares adult literacy in the United States and in each southeastern state in 1900 and 1980. It shows clearly the dramatic educational progress that has been made during this century: Literacy rates in the Southeast have increased absolutely and relative to the national standard.

Table 2 shows the percent of the population over age 15 classified as literate for each of the southeastern states, from 1900 to 1980. In every state, the picture is one of steady progress. In 1900, when the United States' average literacy rate was 88.7 percent, the southeastern state closest to the national average was West Virginia, with 87.4 percent of its adult population classified as able to read and write. The lowest literacy rate in 1900 was 60.4 percent (Louisiana). Five of the 12 southeastern states had literacy rates below 70 percent and ten had literacy rates below 80 percent.

By 1980, the picture had changed: The literacy rate of every southeastern state exceeded 97 percent. Furthermore, every state had succeeded in closing the gap between its literacy rate and the national average to within two percentage points. This increase can be attributed to state policies establishing and expanding public school programs, the enforcement of compulsory attendance, and state initiatives to improve the quality of instruction.

The most striking aspect of this increase in relative literacy rates in the Southeast is that it occurred during a period in which national literacy levels were themselves climbing, and when the total population of the Southeast was growing rapidly.

*Joint Center for Political Studies, "Working Paper: Desegregation of Black and Hispanic Students from 1968 to 1980," Washington, D.C., 1982.

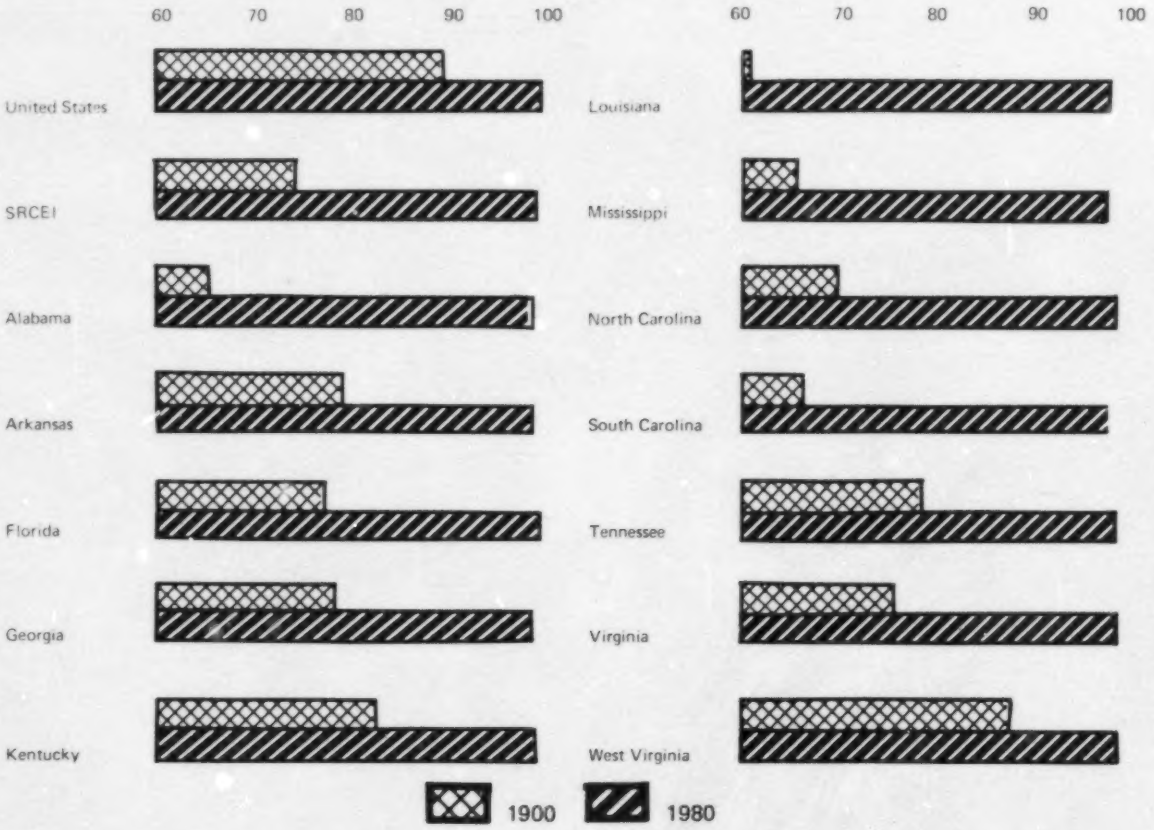
TABLE 1
POPULATION AND PUBLIC SCHOOL PUPILS, 1980
(Numbers in Thousands)

*Estimated

	Total Population	Age 5-17 Population	Public School Pupils	Private School Pupils*
UNITED STATES	226,546	47,451	40,890	1,532
SRCEI STATES	52,669	11,232	9,702	602
ALABAMA	3,894	870	759	62
ARKANSAS	2,286	495	448	19
FLORIDA	9,746	1,792	1,510	205
GEORGIA	5,463	1,229	1,069	84
KENTUCKY	3,661	796	670	71
LOUISIANA	4,206	966	778	166
MISSISSIPPI	2,521	595	477	50
NORTH CAROLINA	5,882	1,258	1,129	59
SOUTH CAROLINA	3,122	708	619	50
TENNESSEE	4,591	975	854	73
VIRGINIA	5,347	1,134	1,010	13

SOURCES: U.S. Census Bureau, "Provisional Estimates of Social, Economic and Housing Characteristics, 1980," pp 14-19; "Condition of Education 1982," p. 48; "NCES Bulletin," June 1982, p. 7.

FIGURE 3
LITERACY OF POPULATION, 1900 & 1980



SOURCES: Statistical Abstract of U.S. 1980, Table 241, and U.S. Census, "Current Population Reports," p. 23, No. 8.

TABLE 2
LITERACY OF POPULATION, 1900 - 1980

(PERCENT OF POPULATION AGE 15 AND OVER)

	1900	1930	1960	1980
United States	88.7	95.2	97.6	98.8
SRCEI	73.6	89.3	95.9	98.1
Alabama	64.9	86.0	95.8	97.9
Arkansas	78.7	92.4	96.4	98.1
Florida	76.6	92.3	97.4	98.7
Georgia	77.9	89.6	95.5	98.0
Kentucky	81.9	92.7	96.7	98.4
Louisiana	60.4	84.9	93.7	97.6
Mississippi	65.9	85.2	95.1	97.6
North Carolina	69.9	88.5	96.0	98.2
South Carolina	66.6	83.3	94.5	97.7
Tennessee	78.1	92.0	96.5	98.3
Virginia	75.7	90.3	96.6	98.6
West Virginia	87.4	94.5	97.3	98.6

SOURCE: Statistical Abstract of U.S. 1980, Table 241, and U.S. Census, "Current Population Reports," p. 23, No. 8.

ASSESSING PROGRESS: QUALITATIVE MEASURES

What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all its children. Any other idea for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy.

John Dewey

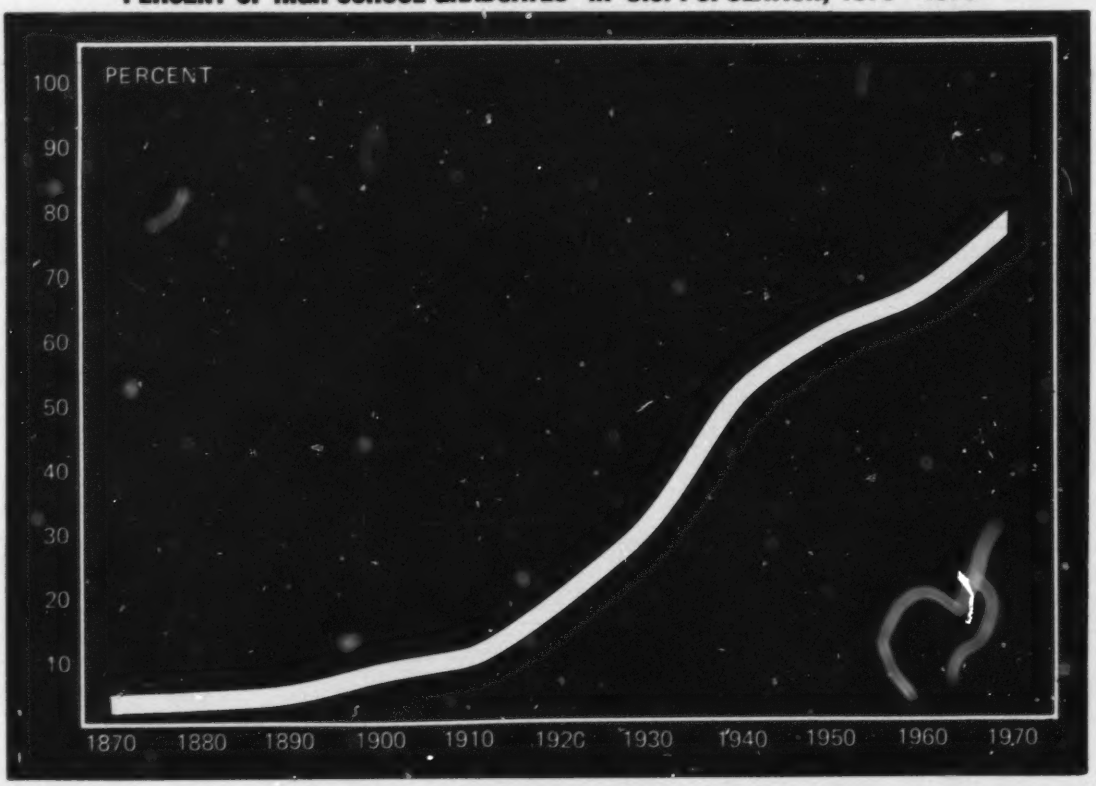
The goal of "universal education" has a qualitative as well as a quantitative dimension. Clearly, the public schools are expected to do more than enroll the appropriate target populations; they must also deliver a qualitatively "suitable" education. The definition of a suitable education reflects the social, political, and economic priorities of society. That definition changes as those priorities change.

The suitable education of the 19th Century, for example, was defined largely as the "Three Rs," and was accomplished by an average of four to six years of schooling. The high school diploma, representing 12 years of education, now stands as the norm for the scope of a suitable education. (The sufficiency of that definition is now being questioned.) Figure 4 shows the growth of the number of high school graduates as a percent of the 17-year-olds in the United States – illustrating the emergence of the high school diploma as the accepted norm for a basic education.

In the Southeast, the data reveal a picture of even greater growth in the number of high school graduates. (See Figure 5.) In the relatively short period from 1970 to 1980, the proportion of high school graduates in the adult population increased by 40 percent. In 1970, only 42 percent of those 25 and over had completed a high school education; by 1980, that proportion was 58.6 percent. Some of that increase was the result of migration into the region, but the largest share of new graduates was the result of the southeastern states' efforts to educate all their citizens.

Viewed from another perspective, those data draw a picture of noteworthy accomplishment. Between 1950 and 1980, the median years of schooling completed by Southeasterners had risen from 8.4 years to 12.3 years.

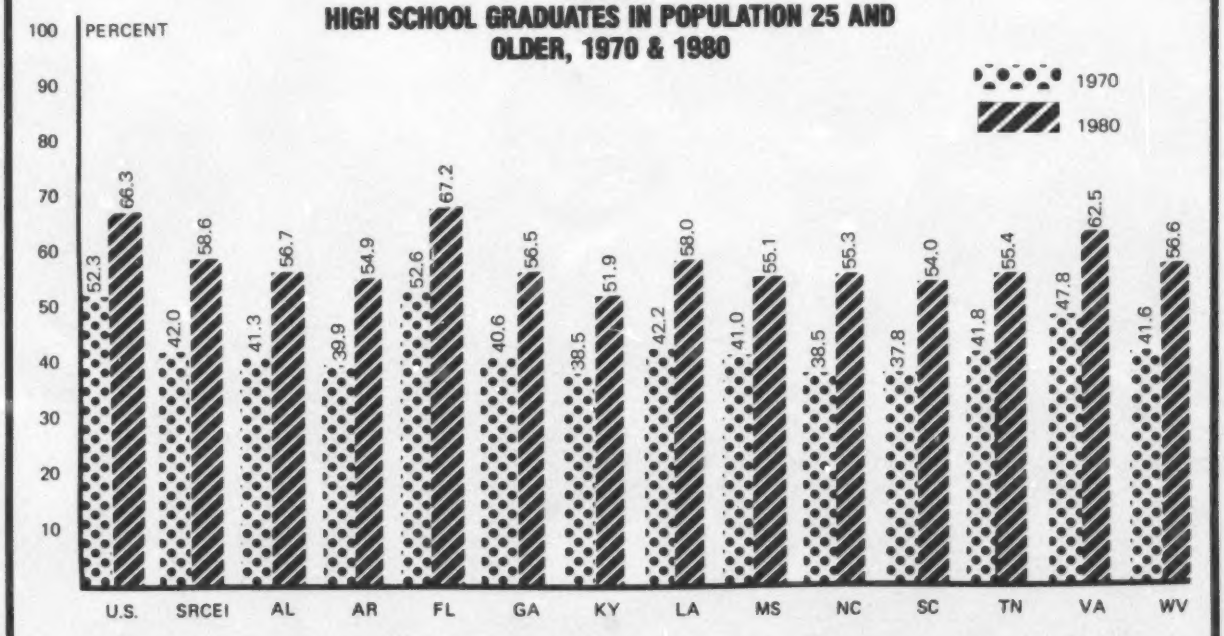
FIGURE 4
PERCENT OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES IN U.S. POPULATION, 1870 - 1970



Percent of 17-year-olds who are high school graduates.

SOURCE: NCES, Digest of Education Statistics, 1980, p. 64.

FIGURE 5
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES IN POPULATION 25 AND OLDER, 1970 & 1980



SOURCE: U.S. Census, "Provisional Estimates of Social, Economic and Housing Characteristics," 1980, pp. 14-19.

That is, by 1980, half of the adult population of the southeastern states had completed some education beyond the high school level. This is in sharp contrast to 30 years before when half of the adult population had completed less than the 9th grade. (See Figure 6.)

These educational attainment profiles show two dimensions of progress by the public schools. First, a larger proportion of the population receives a high school education each year, and, second, a larger proportion acquires additional education beyond the high school level – primarily in post-secondary technical schools and community colleges.

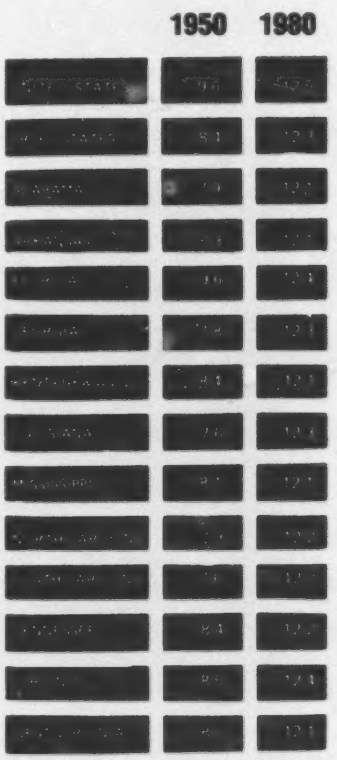
The achievements take on special relevance when one considers the context in which they took place. One out of five school-age youngsters in the Southeast comes from an environment of poverty. This presents both greater needs and greater challenges to the school system.

Expanding the Basic Educational Program

Increased amounts of schooling are but one part of the changing picture of public education in the Southeast. Since 1900, expectations concerning the content of a suitable education have expanded to include a much broader range of cognitive sk and intellectual experience than ever before. These new content areas include scientific knowledge, higher mathematical ability, communication skills, literature, arts, social science, and others. New technologies which are beginning to change our society and economy will necessitate still further curriculum modification.

Recognizing that math, science, and communication skills are essential economic tools in our highly technological society, today's educational leaders seek major improve-

FIGURE 6
MEDIAN SCHOOL YEARS COMPLETED



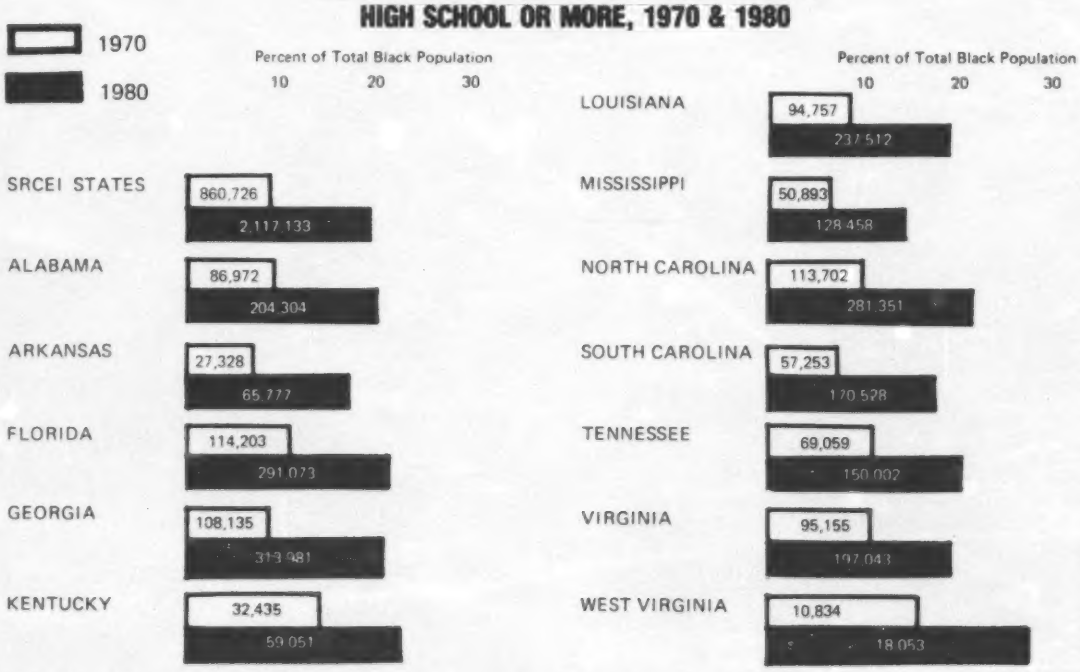
SOURCE: "Statistical Abstract of U.S.," 1980; and 1980 U.S. Census Reports

FIGURE 7
PUBLIC KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT, 1970 & 1980

	1970	1980
SOUTHEAST	380,914	566,288
ALABAMA	12,668	35,577
ARKANSAS	4,860	29,147
FLORIDA	50,179	89,162
GEORGIA	22,313	63,514
KENTUCKY	10,026	40,998
LOUISIANA	25,772	50,147
MISSISSIPPI	N.A.	4,759
NORTH CAROLINA	17,667	73,890
SOUTH CAROLINA	10,934	34,479
TENNESSEE	19,328	55,382
VIRGINIA	28,785	62,569
WEST VIRGINIA	4,484	26,664

SOURCES: 1970 Census Reports, and "Provisional Estimates of Social, Economic and Housing Characteristics, 1980," pp. 14-19.

FIGURE 8
BLACK ADULTS COMPLETING FOUR YEARS OF HIGH SCHOOL OR MORE, 1970 & 1980



SOURCES: 1970 Bureau of the Census data; U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Provisional Estimates of Social, Economic and Housing Characteristics, 1980."

ments in these instructional areas, as well as promote programs to help students become more informed consumers, critical thinkers, and efficient problem solvers.

Building on the gains in knowledge and understanding of the educational process, public schools have expanded the concept of universal education to include numerous new, specialized programs as well as more intensive efforts in traditional areas. The addition of kindergarten programs to the basic curriculum during the past decade has been one such area of program expansion.

Research has shown the effectiveness of kindergarten programs in preparing children for a better start and greater comprehension of material presented in the primary grades. Kindergarten plays a key role in the schooling process at a time when a growing knowledge base is required for full participation in our rapidly changing technological age.

All but one of the southeastern states now has a statewide kindergarten program. As a result, public kindergarten enrollments rose from a total of 380,914 in 1970 to a total of 566,288 in 1980. This growth of 49 percent (far in excess of population growth rates) identifies the kindergarten program as one of the fastest growing sectors of public education in the Southeast during the 1970s. (See Figure 7.)

Providing Equal Opportunities for All

For the populations traditionally excluded from the mainstream of American society – racial minority groups, women, the handicapped, and the gifted – the last several decades have brought change and the opening of many new opportunities. The elimination of discriminating policies and practices, improved curricula, compensatory education, bicultural instruction, and services for the gifted and the handicapped have all played a part in writing that story of progress.

Equal Opportunities for Black and Disadvantaged Students

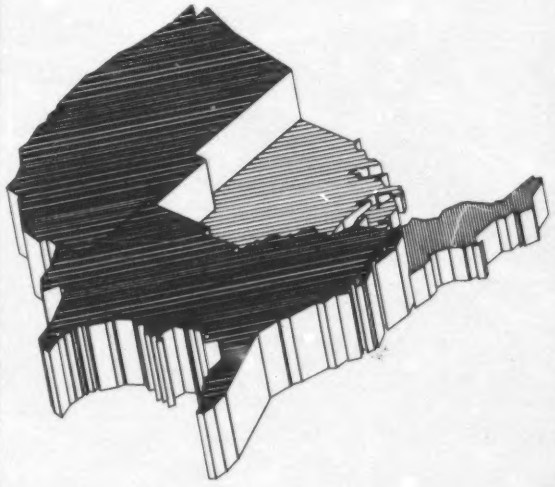
Black and disadvantaged students – who have, historically, had more limited educational opportunities than White middle class youngsters – have benefitted from numerous public school improvement programs. An example: An increase between 1970 and 1980 of 145 percent in the number of Black adults who had completed four years of high school or more. This compares to a 26.7 percent increase in the national proportion of high school graduates. (See Figure 8.)

These data have special significance in light of the relatively high minority populations living in the Southeast. 1980 Census data show that 30 percent of all racial minority group members in the United States reside in the southeastern states. The proportion of minority persons to total population in the Southeast (21.5 percent) is almost 50 percent higher than the comparable national proportion (16.9 percent). (See Figures 9 and 10.)

Programs for the Non-English Speaking

Through bicultural and other supplementary instructional programs, significant strides have also been made in meeting the needs of youngsters who are not proficient in English. In 1980, 3.3 percent of the region's population was born abroad (150,000 Cuban and Haitian refugees en-

FIGURE 9
PERCENT NON-WHITE POPULATION BY CENSUS REGION, 1980

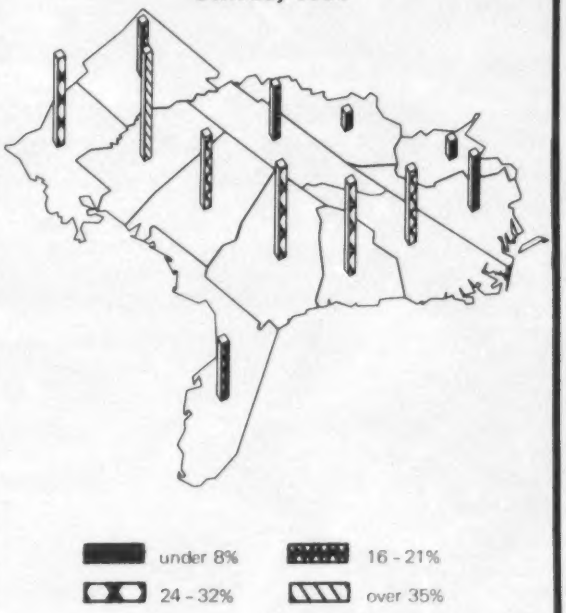


SOUTH: 21.77% NORTHEAST: 13.86%

NORTH CENTRAL: 11.33% WEST: 19.18%

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Provisional Estimates of Social, Economic and Housing Characteristics," 1980.

FIGURE 10
PERCENT NON-WHITE POPULATION IN SRCEI STATES, 1980



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Provisional Estimates of Social, Economic and Housing Characteristics," 1980.

tered Florida alone) and 2.5 percent of the region's population was of Spanish descent, many of them Spanish-speaking. Thus, the strengthening of bicultural programs continues to contribute to achievement of the goal of education for all.

Sex Equity Efforts

Another area of progress in the last decade has been movement toward the elimination of school policies and practices that discriminate against girls and women. Through curriculum revisions, staff training, and innovative programming, education has reduced the sex role stereotyping and sex discrimination typical of earlier school programs. The number of girls and boys enrolled in non-traditional courses – including vocational education, math, and science – has risen significantly. Counseling practices have been improved and greater opportunities exist for girls to participate in athletic activities. Current public school policies reflect a more positive view of both boys and girls in non-traditional roles which now seem to be commonly accepted by society.

Programs for the Gifted and Talented

The expanded definition of universal education has meant that schools must meet a full spectrum of student needs. This includes not only programs for the handicapped or the disadvantaged, but advanced and special programs for gifted and talented children – youngsters whose gifts might never be realized without these special opportunities. Programs for gifted and talented children include enrichment activities beginning as early as kindergarten and range all the way to advanced academic courses and counseling, advanced placement, and special schools for math and science and the arts.

Expanded Vocational Education Opportunities

Public secondary schools have also assumed a greater responsibility for providing vocational education opportunities. The result: enrollments in vocational courses jumped 269 percent between 1960 and 1980 – from 1,204,241 to 4,445,994. Not only did the numbers of enrollees increase, but the opportunities themselves expanded, providing both a greater variety of course offerings and more sophisticated instructional methods.

Service to Exceptional Children

In most southeastern states, approximately one out of every ten public school students receives some specialized educational services.(See Table 3.) That statistic reveals an area of progress during the past decade. Through new educational initiatives, schools now identify and serve children with learning disabilities, emotionally disturbed youngsters, the deaf and hard of hearing, visually and speech impaired children, mentally retarded persons, orthopedically and other health impaired youngsters, and the multi-handicapped.

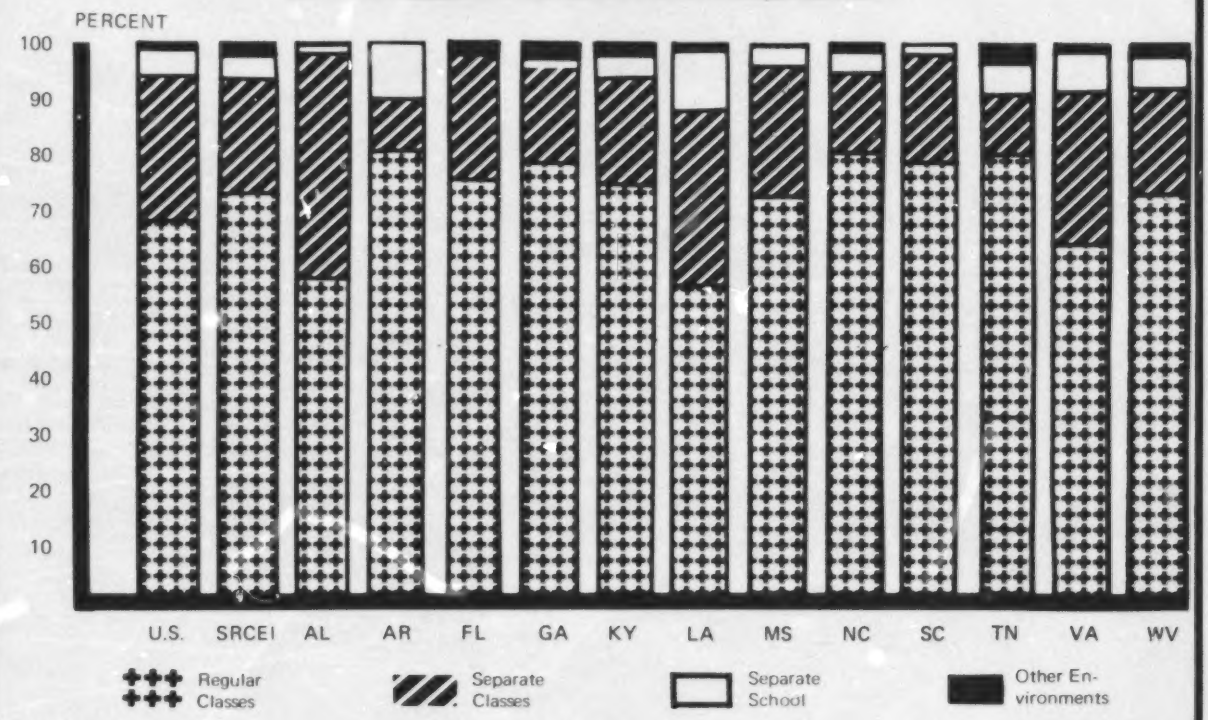
In some instances, youngsters in these specialized categories participate in full- or part-time programs de-

TABLE 3
EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN AGES 3-21 SERVED IN PUBLIC SCHOOL PROGRAMS, 1976 - 1981

	1976-77	1977-78	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81
United States & Territories	3,708,588	3,777,286	3,919,073	4,036,219	4,177,689
Alabama	53,987	60,265	69,749	72,378	76,296
Arkansas	28,487	34,741	40,345	45,027	49,096
Florida	117,257	125,427	128,463	136,963	144,532
Georgia	85,209	86,491	97,786	101,847	111,981
Kentucky	57,057	59,350	62,975	67,087	70,628
Louisiana	86,989	87,995	93,369	85,640	82,723
Mississippi	29,219	32,374	39,240	42,430	46,495
North Carolina	98,035	97,087	108,197	114,894	119,018
South Carolina	72,357	71,144	70,336	71,466	69,973
Tennessee	99,251	96,378	93,064	93,004	95,168
Virginia	77,616	81,329	87,173	91,051	97,972
West Virginia	30,135	29,874	31,293	33,964	36,573

SOURCE: 4th Annual Report, U.S. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services

FIGURE 11
PERCENT OF CHILDREN AGES 3-21 SERVED IN DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS, 1979 - 80



	REGULAR CLASSES	SEPARATE CLASSES	SEPARATE SCHOOL	OTHER ENVIRONMENTS
UNITED STATES	67.70	25.45	5.13	1.71
SRCEI	72.91	20.71	5.12	1.68
ALABAMA	57.81	40.32	0.97	0.90
ARKANSAS	80.97	8.45	10.20	0.38
FLORIDA	75.09	23.72	–	1.19
GEORGIA	78.16	17.47	1.01	3.37
KENTUCKY	74.95	18.78	4.25	2.02
LOUISIANA	56.64	30.47	11.48	1.40
MISSISSIPPI	73.25	22.02	3.82	0.90
NORTH CAROLINA	81.43	13.06	3.95	1.56
SOUTH CAROLINA	79.67	18.98	0.41	0.94
TENNESSEE	79.92	10.66	5.99	3.42
VIRGINIA	63.89	26.48	8.09	1.54
WEST VIRGINIA	73.17	18.09	6.17	2.57

SOURCE: "Fourth Annual Report," U.S. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services

signed especially for their needs. In most instances, however, exceptional students participate in regular classroom programs while receiving the services necessary to accommodate their needs.

In the Southeast, 72.9 percent of the children receiving special educational services receive them in the regular school environment (see Figure 11), so as not to disrupt the normal educational program – a practice commonly known as "mainstreaming." Such high levels of service in the regular classroom setting require major staff training efforts. As a region, the southeastern states have a higher proportion of youngsters being served in this way than the United States average (67.7 percent).

For all but two southeastern states, the over-all proportion of students receiving special education is higher than the U.S. average. That difference is indicative of two things: the efforts of the public school systems to identify and serve students with special needs; and the effect of greater poverty in the Southeast which produces a disproportionate number of persons with special needs.

Services to exceptional children include expanded curriculum offerings, teacher training programs, the redesign and alteration of buildings and transportation systems, and rehabilitation and vocational training.

FIGURE 12 -A
PUPIL/TEACHER RATIOS: U.S., SRCEI, CENSUS REGIONS — 1980

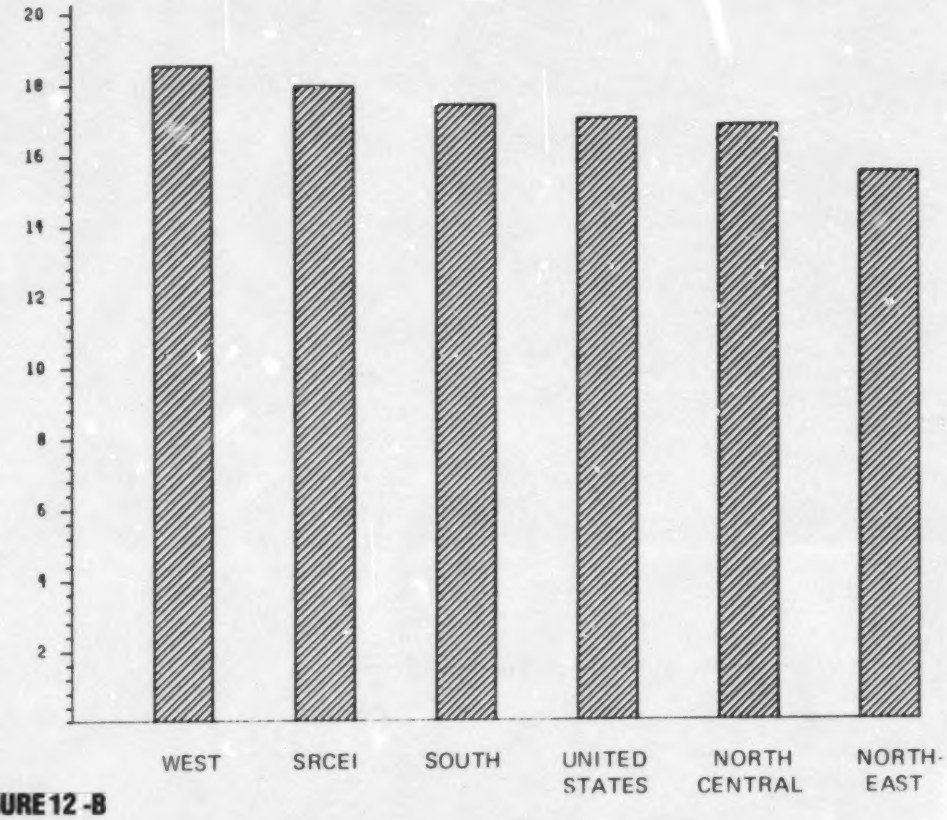
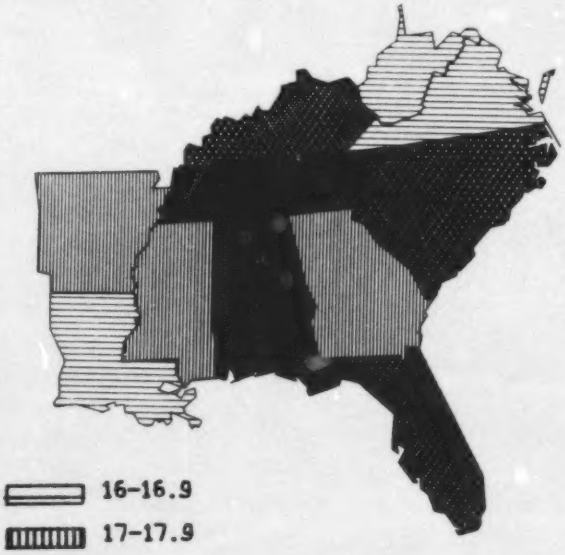


FIGURE 12 -B
PUPIL/TEACHER RATIO IN THE SOUTHEASTERN STATES, 1980



UNITED STATES	17.05
SRCEI STATES	17.97
SOUTH	17.42
NORTHEAST	15.52
NORTH CENTRAL	16.84
WEST	18.54
ALABAMA	19.72
ARKANSAS	17.38
FLORIDA	18.78
GEORGIA	17.41
KENTUCKY	18.64
LOUISIANA	16.16
MISSISSIPPI	17.31
NORTH CAROLINA	18.75
SOUTH CAROLINA	18.02
TENNESSEE	19.60
VIRGINIA	16.35
WEST VIRGINIA	16.80

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics.

The Accountability Movement: Improving the Process of Education

As the minimum goals of universal enrollment, literacy, and high school completion are met, additional criteria are added for measuring the success of the public schools. In the last decade, new emphasis on the effectiveness of instructional methods has been expressed throughout the region in statewide policies and laws setting minimum competency standards and assessing educational outcomes. Since 1976, 10 of the region's states have developed standards for minimum competency or high school completion. (See Table 4.)

While different in detail, these accountability programs share a common thrust – to ensure that completion of minimum attendance requirements will also mean attainment of the minimum competencies required to function successfully as workers, democratic citizens, learners, and family members. The accountability programs are designed both to assess students' skills and to provide remedial services where necessary.

Staff Improvement

Integral to the thrust of the accountability movement are increased efforts to improve teacher and staff effectiveness. A number of initiatives in the last decade have helped improve teacher and administrative skills including strengthened certification standards, increases in inservice training, cooperative programs with teacher training institutions, and improved evaluation methods.

Another measure of the region's success in improving teacher standards is the decrease in the ratio of pupils to teachers. Between 1973 and 1980, the total number of classroom teachers in southeastern public schools increased from 457,876 to 501,759, while enrollment declined from 10 to 9.7 million students.

The increase in the number of teachers relative to pupils is a general indicator of more intensive attention and instructional effort being provided each student. It also reflects the increase in the number of specialized courses and programs being offered.

In Figure 12, the 1980 pupil/teacher ratio in each of the southeastern states is compared to the national average. The southeastern average was within one student of the national pupil/teacher ratio. Three of the 12 southeastern states – Louisiana, Virginia, and West Virginia – had ratios better than the national average. The over-all range was relatively small: from 19.72 pupils per teacher to 16.15 pupils per teacher.

Not reflected in those numbers is the significant increase throughout the region in the use of teacher aides. The majority work in elementary classrooms, where their efforts have been shown to be extremely valuable in helping children learn since they make possible the individualized instruction so critical to student success.

Attention has also been given to improving the management effectiveness of school principals. Initiatives include regular staff development for school administrators, strengthened certification requirements, state-level principals' institutes, and the legal mandate for a program of competency-based certification criteria for school managers.

TABLE 4
MINIMUM COMPETENCY TESTING PROGRAMS IN THE SOUTHEASTERN STATES

STATE – DATE PROGRAM STARTED	GRADES TESTED	USE OF TESTS
ALABAMA, 1977	3,6,9	A
ARKANSAS, 1979	3,6,8	C
FLORIDA, 1976	3,5,8,11	A,B
GEORGIA, 1977 and 1978	4,8,10,12	D
KENTUCKY, 1978	3,5,7,10	C
LOUISIANA, 1977	4,8,10	C
NORTH CAROLINA, 1977	1,2,3,6, 9,11	A,C
SOUTH CAROLINA, 1978	Pre-sch,1, 2,3,6,8,11	C
TENNESSEE, 1977	4,5,6,8	A,C
VIRGINIA, 1976 and 1978	K-6 and 9-12	A,B

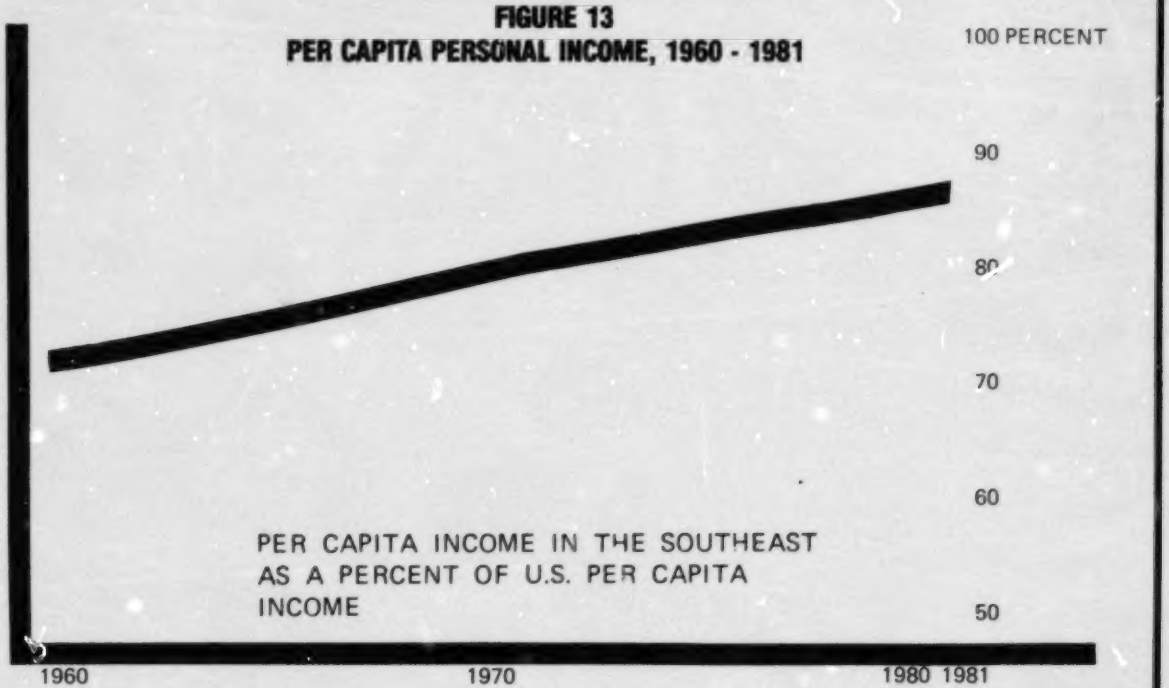
A – High School Graduation
B – Grade Promotion
C – Instructional Improvement and Remediation
D – Under Study

SOURCE: "Analysis of State Minimum Competency Testing Programs," Education Commission of the States, Feb 1980.

In Mississippi, state policy makers chose intensive staff development rather than minimum competency standards to improve school programs. After four years, those efforts have borne impressive fruit: Two of the three grades tested (4th and 8th) on the California Achievement Test scored at the 50th percentile; 8th graders scored at the 45th percentile.

West Virginia policy makers also chose a route other than minimum competency standards. In a program involving educators and lay persons from throughout the state, West Virginia is conducting a thorough revision of curricula, and examining various options related to competency standards.

FIGURE 13
PER CAPITA PERSONAL INCOME, 1960 - 1981



	1960	1970	1980	1981		1960	1970	1980	1981
UNITED STATES	$1,850	$3,119	$9,480	$10,491	LOUISIANA	$1,369	$2,330	$8,487	$9,518
SRCEI	1,358	2,551	8,113	9,014	MISSISSIPPI	967	1,925	6,550	7,408
ALABAMA	1,246	2,317	7,467	8,219	NORTH CAROLINA	1,252	2,474	7,780	8,649
ARKANSAS	1,125	2,142	7,119	8,044	SOUTH CAROLINA	1,142	2,303	7,268	8,039
FLORIDA	1,728	3,058	9,153	10,165	TENNESSEE	1,318	2,454	7,613	8,447
GEORGIA	1,359	2,604	8,049	8,934	VIRGINIA	1,598	2,996	9,380	10,349
KENTUCKY	1,322	2,425	7,552	8,420	WEST VIRGINIA	1,378	2,333	7,693	8,377

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, September 12, 1982 Press Release

Funding Educational Programs

Progress in education in the Southeast requires a substantial investment of public resources. Fortunately, education is a public investment whose dividends include economic growth, individual opportunity, political strength, and social and cultural enrichment. At a recent meeting of the Southern Growth Policy Board, seven southern governors expressed the critical school-society relationship clearly: "Without quality education," they agreed, "there can be no economic growth."

In 1980, public school (K-12) program costs in the Southeast totalled $18 billion, derived from state, local and federal tax revenues. That the investment has borne fruit is evident in per capita income data. Historically, the South has trailed far behind other regions in terms of wealth. But in recent years, that gap has closed. (See Figure 13.) In 1960, the per capita personal income for the Southeast region was $1,358 – or 73 percent of the national per capita income figure of $1,850. In 1981, that figure had increased to 85 percent of the national average; per capita income in the Southeast was $9,014 compared to the national figure of $10,491.

The region's 1980 education expenditures were 38 percent of the total state and local government expenditures. Public school expenditure – as a percent of total state and local expenditure – has declined regionally since 1970,* when it accounted for 43 percent of the total. While actual dollars spent on education grew during the decade, a percentage decline occurred because other areas of public expenditure grew faster than education. With the advent of the "New Federalism," this trend may be expected to continue.

Another indicator of financial support for education is per-pupil expenditure. Among southeastern states, per-pupil expenditures for public schools rose from $920 in 1973 to $1,817 in 1980. It must be noted that part of this growth has been offset by the inflationary trend of the past decade. However, despite similar inflationary increases, the growth in regional per-pupil expenditure was greater than the national average increase – a further indicator of regional progress in improving public education opportunities.

*Except in Mississippi, where education expenditures – as a percent of total state and local expenditure – remained approximately constant during the decade.

CONCLUSIONS

Commitment, change, and progress characterize public education in the Southeast in this century. Through a variety of constitutional, legislative, and administrative initiatives, the states of the Southeast have moved the region's public schools in long strides toward the nation's mission of universal education. In just a few decades, the Southeast has achieved nearly universal adult literacy; public schools enroll nearly 90 percent of all 5 to 17 year-olds; and the number of high school graduates has grown dramatically. In 1980, the median years of schooling completed was above the 12th grade – compared to the 9th grade education that was the median just a generation ago.

The region has the nation's best record of achievement in school desegregation, and has succeeded in expanding opportunities not only for Blacks, but for disadvantaged students, women, non-English speaking youngsters, the gifted and handicapped. For these students, equal educational opportunity means not only equal access to school programs, but special compensatory, remedial, and enhanced services to ensure a successful school experience.

Expanded curricular offerings – including science, math, art, social studies, and vocational courses – represent another area of success. To these have been added new supplementary services which enhance opportunities for learning: food services, counseling and diagnostic services, health services, and transportation. Finally, a series of new initiatives in the last decade has resulted in improved teacher education and training programs, more effective school administration, and minimum competency testing standards.

Thus, the story of education in the Southeast in this century is one of progress – written through the active commitment of educational and political leaders to the improvement of educational opportunities.

Despite that unquestionable progress, however, schools are not without significant challenges and problems. Educators have worked hard (and, as these data show, successfully) to close the gap between the Southeast and the rest of the nation in terms of educational attainment and opportunity. While that gap has been narrowed or closed in virtually every category, it still remains a challenge to regional educators.

THE CHALLENGE OF POVERTY

Although there have been marked gains in recent years, the Southeast still has the greatest proportion of persons living below the poverty level – a reality which is of serious concern to the schools. Not only does the high level of poverty present greater challenges to the schools, it is also a problem which relies on improved education for its solution. It is a knowledgeable and skilled labor force which will attract the new technology and higher paying job opportunities needed to overcome the Southeast's legacy of poverty.

USING NEW TECHNOLOGY

Today's world of rapid change, complexity, and high technology demands dramatically different educational strategies. If Americans are to be competitive in the world economy, educational policy makers must come to terms with such questions as: How to provide current workers with new skills – throughout their lives; How to ensure that today's youngsters have appropriate skills for tomorrow's work; how to continually upgrade and update curricula to keep pace with the new technological advances of society; how to work cooperatively with the business/industrial community; how to use new technologies to make the educational process more effective and more efficient.

The last question deserves special note. Today's technologies are not simply the newest equipment to be added to existing institutions. They demand a transformation of the institutions themselves and a new understanding and vision from all society. The key to using technology successfully will be the extent to which educators and policy leaders attain that understanding and vision. Thus, it is the challenge of technology, more than any other, that will make staff development and training one of the highest priorities of public education in the decades immediately ahead.

FUNDING QUALITY EDUCATION

Ironically, in some of the region's success stories are to be found the seeds of one of the most difficult future challenges. Expanded curricula, increased enrollments, special services, and broader social responsibilities – the characteristics of the improved educational system – are costly. And,

while the benefits of these improvements – in greater literacy, higher enrollment rates, greater numbers of graduates – are immense, so are current fiscal constraints. The Southeast has special cause for concern in this era of "New Federalism," for it relies more heavily than any other region on federal funds to support public education. Thus, developing creative alternative sources of funding for education is perhaps the most immediate priority facing educational policy makers in the near future.

If the Southeast is to continue the progress toward the goal of universal education, education policy leaders must resolve three major and difficult questions:

- How can the schools help to overcome the legacy of poverty that characterizes the Southeast?
- How can the region help the nation to compete successfully in a highly technological, fast-changing world society?
- How can the schools continue to provide quality educational programs to all citizens at a time when public resources are decreasing?